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Rastafarianism The Rastafarian religion has many different elements. These elements include: history, beliefs, customs/culture, celebrations, and worshipping. Rastafarians believe in the divine nature of Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, whose title before his coronation of 1930 was Ras Tafari (Prince of the House of Tafari). The name Haile Selassie means "Power of Trinity." He was the Emperor of Ethiopia from 1930-1974. Haile Selassie never regarded himself as God, nor did he adhere to Rastafari. According to iconn. org, Rastafarians regard Haile Selassie I as God because Marcus Garvey's prophecy - "Look to Africa where a black king shall be crowned, he shall be the Redeemer" - was swiftly followed by the ascension of Haile Selassie as Emperor of Ethiopia. Haile Selassie I is regarded by Rastafarians as the God of the black race. The Rastafarian religion began in Jamaica in the 1930s. The religion was formed after periods of slavery. Rastafarians regarded Jamaica as hell and Ethiopia as heaven. Rastafarians called Jamaica hell because Africans were divided up and sent to destinations throughout the world, in most cases as slaves to whites. This is why many Africans found themselves in Jamaica. Ethiopia, the homeland, was seen as a place of fond memories of freedom and life prior to oppression. This meant it eventually became regarded as heaven. "Rastafarians believe Jah (God) lives on in some form, and believes that one day he will bring about the return of all black people to their ancestral home in Africa," (Breuilly, O'Brien, Palmer, 152). When Rastafarians have kids, they raise their kids to believe in Jah and after a certain age they should be able to identify who he is. They are also raised to believe that one day he will be raised from the dead and bring them back to Africa, their supposed

homeland. Rastafarians dedicate themselves to preparing for this homecoming, growing closer to Jah, (Breuilly, O'Brien, Palmer). They do this by cultivating peace and harmony with all and by living in a way that is close to nature, mimicking Jah. Another way Rastas try to mimic Jah is by rejecting practices introduced from white culture, which is symbolically called " Babylon. " The culture of Rastafarian is to condemn the eating of meat. They are all vegetarians. In order to spiritually grow as a person, meat has to be gradually eliminated from the diet. According to [www. iconn. org](http://www.iconn.org), " the main reason Rastafarians don't eat meat is because animals try so hard to get away. The fear of the animals can be seen in their eyes. It is evident that they are begging for mercy. Rastafarians will have to show mercy. Within the book of genesis, the LORD gave man dominion over animals. It was not to eat them but to care for them. " An efficient healthy body is very basic. The Rastafarian's diet is designed to meet their personal needs. The Rastafarian's food is normally referred to as ital food within the Rastafarian culture. The most traditional way to know a Rastafarian is by their dreadlocks. " Some people may wear their hair the Rastafarian way — dreadlocks — without being committed to Rastafarian belief or lifestyle, while many believers feel obligated to abandon the traditional hairstyles for the sake of gaining or remaining in employment, " (Breuilly, O'Brien, Palmer, 152). Rastas wear dreadlocks because they do not believe in cutting or combing their hair. It is also the way some ancient African priests and Israelites wore their hair. Sometimes you see a green, red and yellow colored hat over a Rasta's hair. These are the colors of the flag of Ethiopia. Rastas also wear a turban, which is a headband based on cloth winding, over their head to protect and keep their dreadlocks clean. According to [www. iconn. org](http://www.iconn.org), the holy herb, or

known to most as marijuana or ganja, is used in all major Rastafarian celebrations to enhance feelings of peace and community, aid meditation and inspire religious visions. There has often been controversy concerning the legalization of marijuana. Rastafarians are perhaps best known for their religious use of marijuana, which grows plentifully in Jamaica. In addition to ritual use, Rastas also use marijuana for medicinal purposes, applying it to a variety of ailments including colds. Many followers also believe that marijuana aids in the worship of God, Bible study, and meditation. Although not all Rastafarians use marijuana, most believe it will bring a person closer to God. Reggae music originated as an important part of Rastafarian celebrations — asserting the pride and dignity of black people, rejection of white oppression, the beauty of Africa and visions of a peaceful future. Reggae music is intimately connected to Rastafari and its lyrics often speak of oppression, poverty, slavery, apartheid and human rights. One of the most important figures in trying to spread reggae music was Bob Marley. Born Nesta Robert Marley (1945—1981), he remains the most widely known and the best-selling performer of reggae music, and is credited with helping spread both Jamaican music and the Rastafari movement to a worldwide audience. A Nyabingi ceremony brings together believers from a wider area, and often last from several days. At these ceremonies, there are chanting, drumming, singing, praying, and dancing as well as shaving of vegetarian food and smoking of marijuana. Some occasions for a Nyabingi are based on the Julian calendar used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; with the Rastafarian faith has strong links. Holy days and holidays are periods of solemn times for the Rastafarian community worldwide. The Holy days are to pray and ask for penance, fulfilling 2 Chronicles 7v14, " If my people who are

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called by my name, will humble themselves and pray, search for me and repent of their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land." (Himchurch. org). Some Rastafarian celebrations includes: Ethiopian New Year - Sept 11th (represents a holiday, which is, observed with a short Prayer Service from 10am-11am), Christmas Day — Jan. 7th (Rastafarians observed this as a holiday), Haile Selassie's Birthday — July 23rd, and the Anniversary of his coronation — Nov. 2nd, (Breuilly, O'Brien, Palmer, 153). Influential prophets and teachers may also be commemorated, but there is no official festival calendar. Rastafarians do not have a specific religious building that is set aside for worshipping. They usually meet weekly, either in a believers' home or in a community center. The meetings are referred to as Reasoning Sessions. They provide a time for chants, prayers and singing, and for communal issues to be discussed. Marijuana may be smoked to produce heightened spiritual states. The music used at these meetings is known as Nyabingi, and so when meetings are mostly musical they are often referred to as Nyabingi meetings. Meetings may also include large feasts. Rastafarians lay great stress on individual bible study and interpretation.